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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 000976

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UNGA](#) [RS](#) [UP](#)
SUBJECT: UKRAINE: GENERAL COMMITTEE CONSULTATIONS POSTPONED
AMIDST PROCEDURAL WRANGLING

REF: STATE 112510

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff for reasons 1.4(b), (d)

11. (C) Summary and Action Request. (See paras 1 and 10). Per Reftel instructions, Ambassador Wolff encouraged the Ukrainian Mission to defer a request to inscribe an agenda item for the 63rd General Assembly commemorating the Great Famine of 1932-1933 ("Holodomor"), when it became clear that Ukraine did not have the votes necessary to prevail in the General Committee on October 23. Russia resisted Ukrainian attempts to have the item removed from the General Committee's agenda. Amidst procedural wrangling and an informal U.S. filibuster, the President of the General Assembly delayed the beginning of the committee meeting for more than two hours while seeking a compromise. After forceful Russian attempts to start the meeting in order to call a vote, the President abruptly postponed the session. We assess that Ukraine will continue to face strong resistance to inscribing this agenda item. We will encourage Ukraine to use the temporary reprieve to develop a climb-down strategy for their request for an agenda item and to consider an alternative way to commemorate the famine. We recommend that the same message be delivered at senior levels in Kyiv. End Summary and Action Request.

UKRAINE BACKS AWAY FROM GENERAL COMMITTEE VOTE

12. (C) Per Reftel instructions, Ambassador Wolff coordinated with Ambassador Sergeyev and visiting Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Kostenko in advance of the scheduled October 23 General Committee (GC) meeting. Wolff encouraged the Ukrainians to delay scheduled consideration of a request to inscribe an agenda item for the plenary, "Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor)", until Ukraine was certain that it would win a vote to inscribe the item. Wolff assured the Ukrainians that the U.S. would speak in favor of inscription, would call for a vote if requested by the Ukrainians, and would vote in favor of inscription. However, he also told Kostenko and Sergeyev that USUN's own soundings indicated Ukraine did not have the support, particularly from all European members of the GC, necessary to prevail in a vote on inscription. Wolff suggested that Ukraine notify the President of the General Assembly (PGA), as chair of the GC, prior to the meeting that Ukraine wanted to defer consideration of the item pending consultations with interested parties, and to ask the PGA to announce the request for deferral during the meeting. Wolff also spoke to the PGA and his senior staff to ensure they would be receptive to this approach.

13. (C) After considering options and consulting with Kyiv, Ukraine decided to seek a deferment of the item in the GC. Ukraine asked Egypt and the U.K., as GC members, to seek the delay on their behalf, citing ongoing consultations aimed at

resolving the differences that had prevented the GC from taking action on the item during its September 17 meeting. During the PGA's consultations with the U.K., Egypt and Ukraine, which took place in his private office, he appeared sympathetic to the request to delay consideration of the agenda item. At that point, Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin-- the main opponent of inscribing the Holodomor agenda item-- joined the consultations.

14. (C) According to U.K. DPR Karen Pierce, when Churkin entered the discussion the Ukrainian PR was deferential, offered Churkin his seat in the PGA's office, and briefed Churkin in Russian on the state of their discussions. Churkin reportedly made dismissive remarks to the Ukrainians and others in response, and refused to accept a deferment. He said he was fed up with continually deferring consideration of the item, that this was an issue between the Russians and Ukrainians, and that the Ukrainians knew full well Holodomor was not a genocide. Churkin insisted that the issue be voted upon. He offered to defer the item only if it would not be considered again during the 63rd General Assembly. The U.K. and Egypt Ambassadors both pushed back, but Sergeyev undercut their position by saying that Ukraine was prepared to face a vote and that Ukraine had sought a delay only because others had asked them to do so.

THE CLOCK RUNS OUT

15. (C) The PGA, clearly interested in finding common ground, continued consulting with the Secretariat staff and other members in his office, even after the Russians had made clear they would insist on a vote. These consultations further

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delayed the start of the GC, which had already been delayed for an hour. During this time, Ambassador Wolff again met with the PGA in order to buy time, and explained that the U.S. had persuaded Ukraine to find a face-saving way to withdraw the agenda item from consideration. Wolff encouraged the PGA to find a way out for Ukraine.

16. (C) During the continuing delay in the start of the meeting, Ukraine asked the U.S., U.K. and others to preempt a vote on the agenda item by making a procedural motion calling for another temporary deferral of the item. Several delegations, including the U.S. and Russia, debated with the Secretariat the rules that would allow for a deferral of the item prior to a vote. The PGA appeared in the meeting room during these discussions, and continued consulting with members of the GC and secretariat staff. After the PGA appeared, Russian Ambassador Churkin approached the rostrum and demanded that the PGA start the meeting. The U.S. continued to seek a consensus among GC members for a compromise that would give Ukraine time to reconsider its decision to bring the agenda item to a vote.

17. (U) As the time allocated for the meeting began to run out before it had even begun, the U.S. and other countries sought an informal consensus to address the other items on the GC agenda that were not controversial. This infuriated Churkin who again approached the rostrum and demanded that the meeting begin. The Russian outburst appeared to anger the PGA, and shortly afterward, his staff informed the assembled committee that the entire meeting would be postponed for another date.

COMMENT

18. (C) With the assistance of the PGA, and over strong Russian objections, we were able help Ukraine avoid a defeat in the General Committee by obtaining a de facto deferral of the agenda item. Ukraine will not likely win a future vote in the General Committee-- and possibly not in the GA plenary either-- and should be encouraged in the strongest terms to use this temporary reprieve to find a face-saving way to find an alternative to the Holodomor resolution. We have made

this point to Sergeyev, and believe he understands that chances of getting a resolution passed are slim. He is already considering other ways for the UN to mark the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor-- including a non-controversial minimalist resolution, a joint statement to be circulated in the General Assembly (as had been done in 2003 for the 70th anniversary), a public event, or some other option. However, Sergeyev has also told us that this issue is being driven from Kyiv, and he is reluctant not to push ahead with the issue when his instructions haven't changed.

¶9. (C) Despite Churkin's repeated protests, he could not get the PGA to start the meeting and vote the issue. Churkin has likely reached the conclusion that the U.S., and to some extent, the U.K., were behind the procedural wrangling (in effect, a 2.5 hour filibuster). When Churkin approached the rostrum for the second time in the meeting room, one of the points he made to the PGA was that it was U.K. and U.S. lawyers who were arguing procedural points with the Secretariat staff while the Ukrainians were sitting in the back of the room watching. Churkin will ensure he is not caught in this kind of situation again. The next time the GC meets, he will be able to insist on a vote.

ACTION REQUEST

¶10. (C) Despite the absence of a winning strategy, we understand that Kyiv may still be considering whether to force a losing vote in the General Committee in order to bring the issue to the plenary. Such a vote could be called when the General Committee presents the report of its recommendation not to inscribe the agenda item. This course of action could set Ukraine up for an embarrassing loss not only in the General Committee, but possibly in the plenary as well. Ukraine would likely want to enlist our assistance in this effort. Since the decision making on this issue is driven from Kyiv, we recommend a frank discussion in the capital with the Ukrainians on their poor chances for success. This discussion should emphasize that we have bought Ukraine time to develop a climb-down strategy for their attempts to inscribe an agenda item-- not time to take another run at inscription. End Comment.
Khalilzad